
THE ULTIMATE TV GAME SHOW!
You've seen them fight and die on your screen, savoured the heroics and gasped at the violence! Now join the two latest contestants on the TV show of the near future — Mat Yeo's sizzling novel puts you in their shoes! Sweat and suffer with them — then read the tips and try to beat the game...
The blockbuster for the Sega Mega Drive from
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TIPS FORCE
TV
THE NOVEL ■ THE STAGES ■ THE TIPS!
SUPER SMASH T.V.
FLYING EDGE
A Division of Acclaim Entertainment, Inc

All for the prize of a lifetime...

They let loose another volley of fire and dived for cover as Mutoid Man attempted to crush them under his tank tracks. Its attack failed and Ash saw an opening. He took aim and sent a missile screaming toward the tank's right track. The explosion took out the entire right-hand side of the machine and left the beast stranded in the centre of the arena.

'Let's finish him off!' shouted Ash and the two of them moved in for the kill...

Thanks to Nic's toast, Sally and Rosie for their support,
the Ipswich posse (you know who you are!)
and thanks to Chris and Ade for just being there!

Europress Impact Ltd,
Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1JW
Telephone: (0584) 875851
Facsimile: (0584) 876044

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SEGA FORCE PRESENTS

TIPS FORCE



The blockbusting game for the Sega Megadrive!

SUPER SMASH T.V.™

THE NOVEL ■ THE STAGES ■ THE TIPS!

Written and compiled by Mat Yeo

europress IMPACT

Contents



SUPER SMASH T.V.™

THE NOVEL

By Mat Yeo

With thanks to Larry Sparks
and his team at Acclaim Entertainment Ltd for their help and co-operation.

PROLOGUE

Los Angeles, 1999

He had almost made it. No one had been this far before. Sure, others had been close but nobody was going to beat him.

This was one game he had to win. The money, the prizes, the girls and, of course, the glory would be his. The eyes of the world were on him now and there was no way he was going to let them down. Didn't he deserve it? After all, he'd waded his way through the cyberpunks, the hideous Mutoid Man, Scarface and numerous other horrors to get here... the final challenge!

His head was spinning. The loss of blood was starting to make him feel nauseous. Glancing at his arm didn't help. The shrapnel wound was deep and possibly fatal. There was no way to stop the pain.

Still, what did it matter? In a few short moments it would all be over and he would have more wealth and power than most people earn in a lifetime.

Biting his lip, he took a shaky step forward. The blinding lights that surrounded him burnt his eyes and the sound of the crowd was deafening. They wanted to see blood... his, preferably.

But they weren't fussy. This was all a game to them, wasn't it? They were comfortable in their $5000 suits, dripping with jewellery and furs. Or sat at home, glued to the TV as this modern day circus unfolded before them. This was just entertainment to them.



But to him it was everything. His very life depended on the next few, precious seconds.

Blotting out the noise and the pain, he moved toward the door and waited. This was it! The final hurdle. Overcome this and it would be all over.

Pressing his thumb to the door release mechanism brought a fresh adrenalin rush to his aching, tired body. The door slid to one side with a loud hum. The crowd fell silent. He stood up straight and gripped his 9mm automatic rifle with a new-found determination. Flipping the safety catch off, he moved slowly into the darkness.

Three steps in and the lights flicked on. There was nothing here! Not a God-damned thing!

He laughed to himself and, raising his hands, shouted into thin air 'That's it! I've won! I'm the Grand Champion! Me, Bill Parry!'

There was a sound behind him. He whirled round, weapon aimed at the wall. The double doors on the far side of the room began to vibrate and shake. Bill stared in disbelief as cracks began to appear along the walls.

'It... It's not possible!' he stammered.

The wall exploded.

Bill ducked, raising his arm to protect his face from the flying debris. Metal and concrete showered him as he dove for cover. A twisted piece of masonry struck his shoulder, causing him to drop his firearm. The gun spun across the floor and landed in the shadow of something huge. Bill stood, wincing at his new wound.

Looking to the door, he saw a monstrous outline. The smoke began to clear as he squinted, desperately trying to catch a glimpse of this new threat. Automatic

fans whirled into action, drawing the thick cloud out of the room.

Bill stared in horror at the creature before him. The crowd alternately screamed and cheered. He dove for his gun but it was too late. Struck in the chest by something heavy, he flew backwards to land on a pile of rubble.

Something snapped in his chest. He couldn't breathe properly. Looking up, he gazed into the inhuman face that confronted him. He had time to scream once before his neck was snapped like a twig.

The lights dimmed and an all-too familiar voice drifted across a million TV sets around the world:

'WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK, FOLKS, AFTER THIS BREAK!'

CHAPTER ONE

The lights were still on in the apartment. It was always the same when he returned late home from work. Karen insisted on waiting up for him and tonight was no exception.

He moved to the front door, took his key-card from the depths of his pocket and slid it into the wall slot. The green confirmation light winked on as the door activated and slid to one side.

'Where have you been, Jim?' came the usual concerned tone from the kitchen.

Jim was used to this. He and Karen had only been married for three years but every night was the same. It didn't matter whether he was five minutes or five hours late, the greeting was the same.

She was slim and attractive, her dark hair spilling down her back. They'd met back in the spring of 1994. Karen had been part of an anti-nuclear demonstration outside the White House. Jim had the lucky task of arresting her.

He smiled at the memory. She had looked great in tight jeans, CND T-shirt and handcuffs. Those wouldn't have been necessary but the groin kick she'd given him meant he wasn't going to take any chances!

The patrol car was hardly the place to begin a romance, but what the heck. After getting married they'd settled down and become a respectable little couple. The mortgage, kids and large shopping bills had come later.

Now, at the ripe old age of 32, James Lucas had

retired from the police force and taken up a job as night watchman. The money might not be as good but it sure beat busting drug-runners or taking on 12-year-olds brandishing sawn-off shotguns.

Karen preferred it that way, too. She might have been over-protective toward him but he liked it. As a teacher she was used to looking after big kids and Jim was the biggest kid of all. She'd tried to make him slow down and take things easy. 'At your age you should be careful. You're not as young as you used to be!' was her usual speech to him.

'I got tied up at work, sugar,' he said, setting his rucksack down on the kitchen table.

She gave him a peck on the cheek. 'You wish!'

He chuckled at her comment. He couldn't help it if he was good looking! He was tall with fair hair and a rugged complexion. Karen always ribbed him about the glances he got from other women. It was her way of making him feel wanted.

Not that he needed it, of course. Jim loved Karen and Karen loved Jim. It was as simple as that. Besides, the addition of a bouncing baby boy last year had cemented their relationship.

He turned to the living room and wandered over to his son. The TV wall was on, flashing the usual glut of tacky advertising and cheap movies to a world that couldn't really care less. Right in front of it was his son, Mac, bouncing up and down in his high chair.

'Hiya, sport,' said Jim to the energetic infant. He was answered with a flash of white teeth and a small gurgling noise.

Karen walked into the room and sat beside the baby.

'Ash phoned earlier,' she said. 'He's going to pop round later. Says he's got a proposal for you.'

Jim looked up. 'Oh great! It's bound to be yet another of his hair-brained schemes. Honestly, I don't know where he dreams them up. Last month it was bungee jumping and before that solar–diving. The guy's a complete adrenalin junkie!'

He moved to the kitchen and returned moments later, drink in hand.

Karen looked up. 'Don't be so hard on the poor man. You and he are the best of pals. And you know how much you enjoy those adventures of yours. Besides, he's been down ever since Joan left him.'

Jim sat down beside her and set his drink down on the coffee table. 'I guess so,' he said. 'It's just that sometimes I think he's got some sort of, I dunno, death wish! But most of all he'll probably take me with him!'

The TV wall babbled about low-sugar cola and high-priced cars as Karen slid her arm over Jim's shoulders. 'You big baby! You know Ash would never let you come back with a scratch. 'Cos if he did he'd have me to deal with!'

Jim laughed 'Ha! I bet he's terrified! The Wrath of Karen Lucas! Scary!'

'Oh really?' she eyed him. 'Well take this, tough guy!' And with that she sent a cushion spinning out of her hand towards his face. He dodged it easily.

'See what I mean?' he said. 'You couldn't hit the side of a barn door at ten paces! Anyway, I'm serious, Ash gets these ideas and then puts his life, and mine, at risk. I guess I should talk to him, though.'

He glanced up at the TV screen. The wall was filled

with the images of people dashing around some sort of arena, firing weapons and dodging shrapnel. Jim leant forward, frowning.

'Volume increase.' The machine responded and the stereo speakers punched out the sound of a screaming audience, explosions and high-tech weaponry in use.

A man wearing a glittery suit and being hugged by two attractive women appeared onscreen.

'Remember folks, *SMASH TV* is the only show to offer you this kind of action and a whole lot more! For the ultimate in violence, the ultimate in prizes and the ultimate game show, tune in to *SMASH TV*. Every Friday from 11. Be there or else!'

The image faded and was replaced by a cartoon mouse advertising multi-coloured sweets. Mac jigged in his chair.

'Screen off!' snapped Karen. 'I can't believe they get away with a show like that!' she said disgustedly.

Jim sat back in his seat. 'I guess it must be a new show. I've never seen it before, but I can understand its attraction. Let's face it, this is 1999 and the crime rate all over the world's higher than ever before. I guess audiences want more violence on TV. Perhaps it makes them feel good to see someone else getting beaten up instead of themselves.'

Karen stood up. 'Well, it's sick! People slaughtering each other for money… it's just not sane.'

Jim was thumbing through the TV guide. 'Yeah, but look at the viewing figures for this show. Three billion people worldwide tune into this thing! That's got to make it the most popular show ever. It's incredible!

'And that's not all. Not only is it watched by millions, but they can also go on it to win money and stuff. Jeez, that's gross!' He tossed the magazine to the floor and stormed off.

'I need a shower' he said. 'Call me when Ash gets here, would you sweetheart?' and he strode into the bathroom.

Karen turned to Mac who was busy trying to bounce out of his high-chair. 'I think Daddy's a mite ticked off, don't you?'

CHAPTER TWO

The door buzzer went off at around 9pm, waking Jim. He'd fed Mac and put him to sleep a few hours earlier, switched the lights out and dozed off on the couch. Karen had gone out to her mother's earlier and Jim had taken the time to catch up on some much-needed sleep.

He raced to the door, tripping on Mac's toys as he went. 'Open,' he said to the speaker set in the wall, and stood back as the door slid open, spilling light out into the dark corridor. Ash was standing there, grinning from ear to ear. Jim eyed him up and down.

His best friend was a mess, clad in tatty leather jacket, pale blue jeans, his straggly brown hair tied back in a pony tail. Jim had joked about Ash's age once and received a bruised lip for his humour. Like Jim, Ash was someone who thought he could still compete against men half his age.

Jim stood back, gesturing to the couch. 'Come on in, you old scoundrel.'

Ash walked into the apartment, poking a finger in Jim's stomach. 'Getting fat, old man?' he said with a raised eyebrow. 'You're gonna have to get in shape pretty soon if you wanna keep up with me.' Ash dropped down onto the sofa with a loud thump.

'Dammit, Ash, keep the noise down, willya? Mac's in the next room sleeping!' scowled Jim.

Ash just sat there, looking smug. 'Relax mate, you'll give yourself a heart attack!'

Jim sighed to himself. Ash could be infuriating at

times, but they were friends from way back. They'd been together at the police academy. Jim had the misfortune of bunking with Ash during their time there and soon realised he'd got the short end of the stick. Ash was a born practical joker and had delighted in tormenting his poor roomie during their entire stay together. However, a mutual respect had developed between the two and they soon became fast friends.

Jim stared at the walking disaster area in front of him and laughed, 'You'll be gone a long time before me, pal!'

Ash smiled and leant back, waving his hand toward the kitchen. 'Get me a beer, there's a good chap!' His fake British accent made Jim wince.

'I hear and obey, my master!' he said, and went to the fridge. He returned with a cool can in each hand. Setting them down on the table, he sat on the window ledge facing his friend.

Cracking open his can, Jim started: 'Karen tells me you've got another lame-brained idea for cutting our lives short again?'

Ash reached for his beer and grinned incessantly. 'You're not gonna believe this one! This is the ultimate. This is the one that'll make us rich and famous!'

He stood up and took a small silver disk from his pocket. Moving to the TV wall, he set his drink down and switched the device on.

Jim was talking to himself. 'Yeah, that's what you said the last time, and the time before that, and…' Ash cut him off abruptly.

'Watch this,' he said, dimming the lights and returning to his chair. Jim rolled his eyes and stared at the

flickering screen as the laser disk began to display its data.

Once again, Jim was appalled to see images of mass destruction and carnage. Club-wielding maniacs ran about the screen, explosions rocked the cameras and dollar signs constantly flashed on and off as a flurry of activity filled the wall.

Jim scowled. 'This is that sick gameshow, *SMASH TV*!' He reached for the off switch but was stopped short by Ash.

'Just watch,' he said, fixing Jim with a firm stare.

They both returned to their seats. The screen was once more displaying the smarmy, grinning host of the show. Bikini-clad girls were draped over him, decorating his over-the-top red sequin suit, making him look like some sort of obscene Christmas tree.

'Yes folks, this is *the* ultimate game show in the world! We offer the best prizes, the most money and the toughest challenges!'

Jim found himself staring strangely at the host. There was something about him. He couldn't put his finger on it but there was definitely something not right about the charismatic figure.

The host continued, 'And remember, if you think you've got what it takes, give us a call. We're always looking for new blood! *SMASH TV*. ARE YOU READY FOR THE PRIME TIME?' The image faded, to be replaced with a phone number and other details.

'Screen off,' said Ash. He turned to Jim. 'Well, what did you think?'

'I think that anyone who watches that has got a warped sense of humour!' He stood up and moved

over to the light controls. Raising the level in the room, he continued, 'Anyway Ash, why are you showing me this? I saw enough bloodshed as a cop, I don't need to see anymore.'

'I know, Jim, but this is different. This show gives a contestant the chance to win prizes beyond your imagination while wiping out a few psychos in the process. This is one show people are literally dying to be on. Millions of people are queuing up to appear on this show. It's got the highest viewing figures in the world and it's also a one-way ticket to the good life!'

Jim looked at his friend. 'Well, I'm sure that's all very interesting, Ash, but there's no way you're getting me on that insane programme. You'd have to be a homicidal maniac to star in that little massacre.'

Ash was staring back at him sheepishly.

'What is it?' said Jim, dreading the answer.

Ash fumbled with his fingers nervously. 'Er... I've... ah... already entered us. We're booked to be on *SMASH TV* this Friday!'

CHAPTER THREE

'He's done what?' yelled Karen. 'Just who does he think he bloody is? Waltzing in my house and forcing my husband to take part in some disgusting game show? I'm gonna kill him!'

She was busy yelling at the top of her lungs when a waiter appeared.

'Please, madam, there are other customers here as well. Try to keep the noise down,' he said quietly.

Jim and Karen had decided to meet for lunch at their usual restaurant in L.A. The Internationale was one of the first hotels to be rebuilt in Los Angeles after the devastating great quake of 1996. Some clever architect had the bright idea of including an open-top restaurant on the roof of the building. The tempting thought of wondrous L.A. views and good food proved to be a real crowd puller.

Unfortunately, someone forget to mention the hotel was half a mile from the main L.A. flight path. So while the food was good, the sight of high-tech jets pumping out carbon monoxide fumes was a touch off-putting, to say the least.

Jim and Karen had been going there for the last year. They didn't mind the noise or the fumes. They were used to all that from Mac! Besides, the restaurant was only a few hundred feet from Karen's school. They met there every Thursday, at midday, for lunch and a chat.

Jim had finished his meal and was presently relating the story of last night's events to Karen. Her outrage hadn't bothered him. He was used to her flying off the

handle at the slightest thing, let alone a problem as serious as this.

'Ash can be such a jerk sometimes!' she fumed, mashing her fork into her food.

'I guess he was just being a little over-optimistic,' said Jim 'After all, I don't usually back out of his loopy ideas. Perhaps he thought he could sway me with the thought of all that money?'

Karen pushed her plate to one side. 'Well there's no way you're going on the show and that's final. No husband of mine is gonna end up dead just to boost someone's viewing figures!'

Jim nodded. 'That's basically what I told Ash last night. He kept insisting that he'd booked us on the show and it was a matter of life and death if we didn't appear. What's gonna happen? Do we lose our subscription to the satellite channel if I don't go on?'

Jim walked Karen back to school then caught the over-zoom tube to the kindergarten. He picked up Mac and decided to trudge the last mile home on foot.

Driving a vehicle in L.A. was utter madness. The high levels of toxic fumes on the freeways meant that all drivers had to wear safety gas masks for fear of chemical poisoning. The roads in the city were packed with computer-controlled traffic that thundered by at a constant 200 mph. That made driving a nightmare and crossing the road a one-way ticket to an early grave.

Travelling on foot was no safer. The lower levels of the city were treacherous. Crazed drug gangs roamed the streets, removing wallets, jewellery and limbs from hapless passers-by. Only the tough or the stupid ven-

tured along the dark streets at all.

Karen always insisted Jim was the latter and he never denied it. If Jim was taking Mac home, he would usually ride the Tube all the way back, but he'd missed it by two minutes and couldn't be bothered waiting an hour for the next one. Walking the streets was dangerous but he was hoping the sight of a large man pushing a baby carriage would be enough to throw anyone.

As he approached his apartment block he was painfully aware of the silence. The square was usually packed with squabbling youths. Today, however, the alleyways and streets were strangely empty. The suspicious characters who hung out around this neighbourhood were visibly absent.

Jim always kept an eye out for the vicious gang known as the Razorheads. He'd tangled with them a few times when he was on the police force. There was no love lost between them. Jim was used to seeing the gang's trademark: the shaved head with razor blades inserted into the skin. It was a shocking sight but the gang apparently thought it was the sign of an ultimate warrior.

'Yeah,' thought Jim, 'and if my grandmother had wheels she'd be a wheelchair!'

He approached the building's lobby, and was surprised to see a large number of people gathered near the hover-lift doors. Pushing his way to the front, he could make out the uniforms of two MetroCops. A surveillance droid was hovering aimlessly in the air.

Jim turned to one of the men. 'Excuse me officer, can you tell me what's going on here? I live on the 12th floor and I need to get home sometime today.'

The visor-clad cop faced him and replied, 'OK, buddy, less of the wisecracks! You'll get through shortly, just have some patience, willya?'

The cop began to talk to his partner as Jim walked to the stairs with Mac. He turned the corner and bumped into one of his neighbours, Mrs Meredith, who was dashing down the stairs toward him.

'Hey, slow down there, Mrs Meredith! Where's the fire?' The elderly woman stopped next to him to catch her breath.

'Ooh, Mr Lucas, you wouldn't believe what's been going on here!' She set her bags down and sat on the stairs.

'There was some sort of incident here about an hour ago. It seems that some poor man was attacked, right outside the lifts, by a gang of youths. It was terrible. You could hear the noise and the screams from miles away.'

Jim frowned. 'What happened to the man? How badly was he hurt?'

'Well, that's the strange thing,' said Mrs. Meredith. 'The police could find no trace of the man afterwards. It looks like he just vanished.'

Jim looked puzzled. 'Do the police know who was responsible yet?'

The old woman pondered for a second. 'I don't think so. Apparently they were gone long before the MetroCops arrived. Whoever it was must have been in a terrible hurry.

'Anyway, I'm not going to stand around here any longer than I have to. I'm spending the weekend with my sister in New Washington. This place isn't safe for

decent people anymore!' And with that she picked up her bags and trotted to the main doors.

Jim sighed. Karen was bound to hear about this soon. She'd complain about the rough neighbourhood they were living in, the way this might affect Mac and all the usual topics she brought up over dinner. He was in no shape to go three rounds with her tonight. He had to be ready for work at 10 and a blazing row was the last thing on his mind.

The sound of Mac shaking his rattle brought Jim back down to Earth. 'OK, little fella, let's get you home and fed.' Pushing the anti-grav pram up the stairs he began the long trek to the 12th floor.

It took about 15 minutes to reach their floor. Jim was out of breath. He made a mental note to keep in shape more often.

Mac was fast asleep. 'Too much for you, was it?' said Jim to the small bundle curled up in front of him.

As he knelt down to tuck his son in, he noticed something strange on the carpet. There was a deep red stain on the dark blue floor. Jim touched the ground, already knowing what the substance was. His fingers came back covered in blood.

He stood up and noticed there were more red patches trailing off down the corridor. Moving down the hall, with Mac in tow, he realised where the line of blood was leading. With a careful step he turned the corner to his apartment. The red trail led directly under the door.

Before he could insert the key-card as usual, he noticed the intruder light winking on and off. There was someone already in the room.

He checked up and down the hall. There was no sound except that of his own breathing.

Jim pushed Mac's baby carriage to one side and braced himself. He opened the door and burst into the room, prepared for almost anything. However, he was not prepared for the sight that greeted him.

The lights were off and the curtains were drawn. On the couch in front of him was a large bulky shape. Jim moved to the sofa, fists clenched.

'Lights,' he spoke in a nervous tone. The main lights flickered on and the room grew brighter. The strong light made Jim blink as he moved toward the blanketed shape that faced him.

Taking a deep breath, he yanked the cover away and was horrified by what he saw. The figure was covered in blood and cradled its arm like a wounded animal. But the most shocking thing was, Jim recognized the battered man before him.

It was Ash.

CHAPTER FOUR



'What the hell happened to you, buddy?'

Jim was seated in the kitchen next to the blood-soaked Ash. Mac had been hastily put to bed and Jim had broken out the medi-kit in a vain effort to stop the blood loss.

Ash was badly shaken, but appeared to be stable. The all-purpose medi-scanner was a basic medical tool nowadays and had revealed Ash had suffered a fractured wrist and broken rib. Jim's police training had taught him how to cope with wounds like this but the sight of all the blood was still off-putting. Ash was

covered in lots of tiny cuts which bled profusely as the pair began to talk.

Ash spoke through cut lips while sipping water. 'I... I didn't see who it was. It all happened so fast. One moment I'm standing there minding my own business, the next I'm having the living crap beaten out of me. Sure, I tried to defend myself. I took a few of those bald creeps out with a good old left-hook but...'

Jim interrupted, 'Wait a second, did you say bald? Were these guys using flick-knifes and razor blades when they attacked you? They sound like the Razorheads. That's the usual way they attack. Overwhelm you with numbers then cut you to pieces. Was that who it was?'

Ash got to his feet and walked unsteadily to the lounge. Jim followed, leaving the medi-kit behind.

'Ash, I asked you a question. Was it the Razorheads?' he said, standing next to his friend.

Ash staggered over to the couch and slumped down. Jim could tell something was wrong. Most of the time it was impossible to shut Ash up but now he was silent, as if holding something back.

'This isn't like you, mate. What's the problem? Did they hurt you that badly or was it...'

Jim was cut short by a cup flying toward him. He moved quickly and it smashed harmlessly against shatterproof glass.

Ash was looking at him with a terrified expression on his face. 'You don't get it, do you? No one can help me now. Don't you understand? I'm a dead man... a dead man!' His shoulders began to shake as the tears flowed down his wounded face.

Jim sat next to him and faced the wreck of a man next to him. He paused for a moment then spoke.

'Ash, I think you better tell me everything. Just why were those guys after you? And what's all this talk about you being "a dead man"?'

Ash stopped sobbing and straightened up. His shoulders were still. He looked calm but distant.

'I can't tell... it's...' he stammered, then regained his self control. 'Look, I owe money to some guys. A lot of money.'

Jim butted in: 'Just how much money are we talking about here?'

'Five million dollars.'

'Five million dollars!' Jim exclaimed, open-mouthed.

'Give or take a few hundred thousand,' said his friend, apparently unconcerned by the effect it might have been having.

Jim shook his head. 'How the hell did you come to owe that much money to anyone?'

Ash stood up again and positioned himself by the window. 'Gambling. I'd started placing bets on horses before Joan and I split up. That's one of the reasons why she left me. She couldn't stand to see me frittering our money away and so she decided to get out before things got worse. I don't blame her, I must have been hell to live with.' He sat on the window ledge and stared out across the city.

'Anyway, as you know, I've been working at that construction site for the last year, trying to save up enough money to pay these guys off. Then, earlier this month, I started getting death threats through the post, along with some nasty packages, including a letter bomb!

'Then there was the incident this morning. I was told to pay up by Saturday or else. They left me with these so I wouldn't forget.' He gestured to his wounds.

'Why don't you go to the police?' said Jim.

Ash turned and smiled painfully. 'Come on, Jim, you and I both know how the cops work. We spent enough time on the force together to know that.

'Besides, there's nothing they could do. These guys are too big, too powerful. They don't make mistakes and they always get what they want.'

Ash turned back to stare out the window then continued. 'That's the real reason I booked us onto *SMASH TV*. That show offers enough money to clear my debts. And the money would help you and Karen. She's always talking about moving to a better area and sending Mac to a better school. Think of what you could do with all that cash!'

By now Ash was shouting and this had brought cries from Mac's room. Jim dashed to the nursery and settled the child down. He returned moments later to find Ash in the kitchen, beer in hand.

He grabbed his friend by the front of his blood-stained shirt and slammed him against the wall.

'Dammit, Ash, just who do you think you are? Toying with me and my family, trying to ruin our lives! I used to think you were my best friend but now I'm not so sure.' He released his friend and backed away, fists still clenched.

Ash straightened his shirt. 'Look, I'm sorry for doing it but I was desperate. They said they were

going to kill me if I didn't pay up. What was I supposed to do?'

Jim squinted across the kitchen. 'You could have tried a little honesty. You should have come to us and talked it over. We could have helped you raise the cash or…'

'It's no use, Jim. It's this or nothing. I need that money by Saturday or my life is finished. I'll do it on my own, if I have to, but I'm gonna be on that show tomorrow.'

Jim stared at his best friend for a long time. They'd been through a lot together. They'd saved each others asses more times than he cared to remember. Ash could have said that Jim owed him one but it seemed he was playing this one straight.

A choice. Stand by your friend with the chance of losing your life and family, or let him go it alone and live with the memory of your dead friend's plea for help. The choice was a clear one.

Jim faced Ash and smiled.

'So tell me, what time does this show start?'

CHAPTER FIVE

Jim sat up that night, explaining his decision to Karen. Needless to say, she hadn't taken it well and the two of them had spent the night in separate rooms.

Jim couldn't blame her. Having to sit back and watch the one you love get slaughtered in the name of entertainment was hardly the sort of thing you had to deal with every day.

Karen must be going through hell, thought Jim as he attempted to get some rest. Her husband was about to be the star attraction on the most violent show ever and it was his choice to go. Jeez, what a mess.

He rolled onto his side and tried to sleep. It was no use. Images of Karen, Mac and their life together came flooding back. Just what did he think he was doing? Not only was Ash putting his life on the line, he was endangering his family's future. Jim turned over for the umpteenth time.

Ash was right about one thing, though. The money would be useful — assuming they both made it to the end of the show in one piece, that is. With the winnings they could finally move to a real home in the country and afford to buy the things they always wanted. Mac could have a proper education at the finest universities and colleges in the country. No mortgage problems, no debts, no worries.

It all sounded so easy. Perhaps that was why Ash was so willing to risk both their necks. The chance to become infinitely wealthy and internationally famous was enough to make even the most sane of men lose

their minds.

And there, in a nutshell, was the appeal of *SMASH TV*. Greed had been a basic human trait since the dawn of time and it always would be. The gameshow was simply fulfilling Mankind's desire for money and power. You were a better person if you had more money or success than your fellow man. This show was your chance to be that superior person.

Jim was too tired for this. He would need all the rest he could get if he was going to be in any sort of a fit state tomorrow.

Ash had spent the rest of the night explaining to Jim the structure of the show. *SMASH TV* took place in a huge indoor arena, completely walled off from the outside world. The show lasts for as long as the contestants do. It had been known to go on for hours but most entrants only lasted a few levels.

Each level was packed with prizes to collect and guarded by various thugs. The end of each section was apparently protected by some sort of star opponent. Ash was sketchy on the details but he did say something about these guys being 'slightly out of the ordinary'. Knowing Ash, this could only mean they were a force to be reckoned with.

Not that he and Ash would be without help. Weapons were scattered around the arenas and included some new, untested pieces of hardware.

This puzzled Jim. Where would a TV gameshow get hold of high-tech prototype weaponry? The firearms act had been relaxed in 1995 and meant American citizens could own hardware that was previously only available to the military.

Of course, there had been public outrage when this happened as, for example, shop owners could not only stop their shop from being robbed, they could also wipe the criminals off the face of the Earth. This lead to various by-laws being introduced in an attempt to stop the spread of such friendly items as particle beam cannons. High-tech weapons were now carefully regulated and would hardly fall into the hands of an unscrupulous TV producer.

Still, none of this bothered Jim. If he could just keep his wits about him and take each level as it came, then maybe he could make it through this freak show in one piece. One thought would get him through: the image of Karen and Mac.

Staring at the ceiling, he found it comforting. Who knows? he thought. We might even make it out alive.

The possibility was there, even though it was a slim one. He had to believe it if he was to overcome the events that lay ahead.

■■■■■

The kitchen light flickered on slowly as Karen shuffled to the fridge. Sleep was out of the question. She wished the row with Jim hadn't happened. What he needed now was comfort and support, not the usual nagging wife act.

Why couldn't she be more like him in a crisis? Jim always seemed to stay calm at times like this, where she would fly off the handle. 'Damn my temper!' she said to no one in particular.

A rustling noise from the lounge caught her atten-

tion. It was Ash. They'd all decided that he should sleep on the sofa tonight for safety. The Razorheads were bound to be watching his apartment. Jim and Ash had to be at the studio for 12 the next day so they'd decided to stay close just in case.

He moved slowly into the kitchen. 'Couldn't sleep, eh?' he said, wiping the sleep from his eyes.

Karen turned to face him. 'Look Ash, I've only got one thing to say to you. Make sure Jim comes out of this alive. If he doesn't, I swear your life won't be worth living!'

With that she stormed off to her bedroom leaving a sombre Ash with his own private thoughts. Back in bed, she sat up with the covers over her, staring out of the open window.

She dozed off at about 3am. Her last thought had been vicious and cold:

'And I hope they nail you to the wall, Ash.'

CHAPTER SIX

The next morning was a complete disaster. Karen and Jim ate breakfast in complete silence.

Ash was busy showering after the local doctor had seen him. His wounds had been patched up but they'd still take a while to heal. The doctor had warned Ash of the dangers of exerting himself too soon but the show was that day. Ash had no choice.

His fractured wrist and cracked rib had been healed using the doctor's portable medi-healer. The device was in common use these days and used a low-level radiation treatment to knit damaged bones together. This meant even serious injuries could be dealt with in a matter of hours.

However, the body's own healing process had to be given time to kick in so complete rest was usually prescribed. Of course Ash, being Ash, insisted he felt fine and rest was not needed.

He neglected to mention to the poor doctor that in a few short hours he'd be taking part in the most violent gameshow ever, but what did that matter?

Jim and Ash were ready to leave at 11. Karen had decided against going with them and had told Jim she wouldn't be watching the show. Her reasons were her own but Jim couldn't help thinking they'd both be better off close to each other at a time like this. He might have been going in to the arena with Ash and being broadcast to millions of people around the world but without Karen he suddenly felt completely alone. He made a silent promise to himself that this wouldn't be

the last time he saw his wife or son again.

There were no tears as he left. No comforting words or reassuring glances. Instead he was faced with a look of complete and utter abandonment. He never expected Karen to react like this.

His wife stood in the doorway, cradling Mac. The child grinned widely at his father, not realising what was about to happen. Jim leant forward and kissed his son on the forehead. Mac giggled and waved his hand in the air. Jim waved back and turned down the corridor to meet Ash at the turbo-lift.

He stopped halfway and swivelled round. He had expected to see Karen and Mac staring back at him. Instead, he saw the door to his apartment was firmly shut. The red 'lock' light was on. He turned to the lift and stepped inside.

There was silence as they descended to the ground floor. After a few seconds, Ash broke the silence.

'Look Jim, you can back out if you…'

'Shut up, Ash, just shut up!' snapped Jim as they reached the ground floor. 'I know what I'm doing.'

■■■■■

The over-zoom took them directly to the TV station. The studio was located in the Omni building in upper L.A., a huge structure of steel, glass and chrome. It not only housed the TV studio but also a hypermarket, football ground and even a mini-airport.

The building was one mile high and reportedly the tallest building in the world. Built–in shock absorbers meant the entire structure could survive anything

short of the most severe of earthquakes.

It was a city within a city. People lived, worked and slept in this metallic monster. Office blocks were situated next to apartments and shops next to factories. The idea was to provide an entirely independent environment in which people could live their entire lives without ever having to leave the safety of the eight-foot thick titanium walls that surrounded it.

Of course, this also meant the Omni building had it's own problems to deal with. The crime rate in the populated sectors was some of the highest in the entire city. Hence the need for the MetroCops.

Since the police force had been privatised six months earlier, the city had been divided into various sectors. Each area had its own police force but the MetroCops had proved to be the most efficient and controversial of the private sector companies. There had been numerous allegations of corruption and back street deals but they'd been shrugged off by the law enforcement agency.

Besides, as the fly posters announced, 'We're working to protect the people from themselves!' The MetroCops were popular because they got results, even if that meant a few deaths along the way.

Unfortunately, the *SMASH TV* studios were located on the most criminal-infested floor in the entire Omni building. This had brought cries of outrage from the TV networks but worries had been laid to rest when *SMASH TV* debuted and drew in massive audiences from around the world.

There were other violent shows on TV, such as *Atomic Countdown*, *What's My Limb?* and *The*

Disintegration Game, but none were as popular as *SMASH TV*.

The over-zoom tube came to a halt at the Omni building. The place was packed, as usual, and Jim and Ash patiently fought their way through the crowd to the studio. One robo-taxi, five hover-lifts and too many wrong turns later, they were there.

The outside of the studio was basically a sheet of transparent steel that sloped diagonally from the roof to the floor of that level. Two huge metal doors were situated in the centre, guarded by sentry drones.

The drones were a common security measure. The metallic spheres were two feet across and perfectly smooth. In the centre of their body was a circular red eyepiece that flashed every few seconds. The machine was designed to detect unknown body heat patterns and detain them with minimal force.

The MetroCops were known to use them as enforcer droids. Their programming was altered and they became, in effect, hunter-killers. Unfortunately, the drones ran at such high temperatures they often mistook each other for the enemy and usually ended up taking a few citizens with them in the ensuing fire-fight.

The drone on the right spoke in a harsh, metallic rasp. 'Identity required.'

Ash stepped foreward and the other drone zoomed down to hover six inches from his face. He jerked backward then answered,

'Er… hi! I'm Ash Mitchell.' He gestured to his friend, 'And this is James Lucas. We're here for the show.'

The two droids were motionless for 30 seconds then both resumed their positions.

The second drone spoke again. 'Enter.'

Ash turned to Jim and shrugged. They moved toward the doors while keeping a wary eye on the floating watchdogs. The doors slid open on well-oiled hinges, allowing them to pass. Once in the marble-floored lobby, they followed the neon wall strips that lead to the reception area.

They approached the desk and Ash spoke to the receptionist.

'Hello dear, we're here for that little bloodbath of yours tonight.'

Jim groaned as he saw his friend attempt another of his dismal chat-up lines. He noticed it obviously wasn't working when the young lady directed them to the waiting area.

'Please wait in there for the rest of the audience if you…' She was cut short by Ash leaning over the desk.

'I think if you check that device in front of you, you'll see we're actually going to be the main attraction!'

The woman looked flustered and began to type furiously. The screen lit up in response.

'Oh yes, sir, I'm sorry. I didn't realise. If you could just take the hover-lift over there to the tenth floor. There's a reception committee waiting to meet you,' the receptionist said, smiling thinly.

'Thanks,' said Ash, and he and Jim walked to the lifts on the far side of the lobby.

The woman watched them walk off.

'Good luck, guys,' she said under her breath. 'You're gonna need it!'

CHAPTER SEVEN

The lift reached the tenth floor in a matter of seconds. Moving quickly from it, Jim and Ash walked down the well-lit corridor to the waiting area at the end.

As they approached it, a young man in a smart suit appeared. Jim watched him approach and stood near Ash as the man thrust his hand out.

'Hi, I'm Miles Goldman, the station manager. You must be Mr Lucas and Mr Mitchell, yes?' he said, grinning like a Cheshire Cat. Jim took an instant dislike to him and made a mental note to keep an eye on him.

Ash shook his hand and said, 'That's right. We're here for today's show. So what do we do?'

Goldman lead them off down a corridor marked 'High security. Authorised personnel only!'.

'If you'll follow me, gentleman, I'll show you to the changing and briefing rooms.' The little man in the suit was moving at a fast pace, leaving the two larger men behind.

They caught up and Jim whispered to Ash. 'I guess life in TV Land is just one big rush, eh?'

Ash smiled and turned to face Jim as they were moving. 'This guy's a jerk! I've met people like him before. They've got the suit, the money and they act like some little tin-plated dictator. Remind me to kick his ass if I get the chance!'

'Leave some for me, pal!' said Jim as they neared the hurrying figure ahead of them.

As they continued down the corridor, Jim noticed a door on the left that was partially open. The internal

lights were off but a curious reflection on a strange metallic surface caught his eye. The door was marked 'M.M. Dangerous genetic lifeform. Do not enter!'.

Obviously, whoever had been in the room before had a different idea about the word 'Dangerous' than he did. Leaving the door to a high-security room open was surely one way of guaranteeing a quick exit from your job.

The security drones hadn't yet responded to the breach in building security, so Jim decided to let his inquisitive nature get the better of him. Stepping into the darkness, he was aware of the hum of electricity being generated. Whatever was in here with him was using a hell of a lot of power.

He ventured further into the chamber. Straight in front of him was one of the strangest, yet familiar sights he'd ever seen. There appeared to some sort of large tank in the corner of the room with power cables running into it. But the most weird thing of all was what looked like some sort of giant figure seated on top of it.

Jim reached for a light switch of some sort on the wall and found himself grabbed by the wrist. He was pulled out into the corridor by Miles Goldman. The executive was frowning at him and pointing to the sign on the door.

'Can't you read, Mr Lucas? The sign clearly says "Do not enter"! Are you blind?' he said, glaring furiously at Jim.

Jim returned the stare. 'Hey man, I'm sorry. I was looking for the bathroom. Do you know where it is?' Jim's sarcastic tone was apparently noted by Goldman

who promptly marched him down the corridor to a room marked 'Contestant Briefings'. Ash was seated inside.

Jim sat down next to him and began to speak but was stopped by Goldman motioning with his hand.

'Gentlemen, if I may have your attention.' The suited man gestured to a video screen. The screen began to fill with images of previous *SMASH TV* games.

'What you see before you is the ultimate television experience: *SMASH TV*!' he began. 'You two are about to become the next lucky contestants in the gameshow of the future.

'Your task is to travel through the four arenas, collect prizes and defeat various enemies along the way. Each level's divided up into a number of rooms. It's up to you to find the quickest route to the end without getting killed!'

Ash leant over to Jim. 'It sounds great, doesn't it?'

Goldman frowned again, 'Please be quiet!' he snapped, then continued. 'Along the way you'll encounter various adversaries to dispose of. Some of them will give you no trouble at all and others will eat you for breakfast, so be on your toes.

'Prize boards light up on the floor as you go. Simply walk over these to pick up your prize and they'll be added together later. Weapons are distributed throughout each section and appear at random. Use these to defeat the enemy, but be warned, they run out of ammunition very quickly.

'Once a room's been cleared, you must move to the exit or face a quick death, as two sentry drones will appear. Just remember to keep moving, keep firing and

keep smiling for the folks at home! Any questions?'

Jim and Ash looked at each other, then Ash raised his hand.

'Yeah, can you tell me where the bathroom is?'

■■■■■

After their lecture, and subsequent dismissal, Jim and Ash had been taken to the changing rooms to prepare for the imminent game. Goldman showed them the equipment they'd be using.

'You'll both be kitted out in the same gear,' he said. 'You'll wear these combat trousers and boots' — he pointed to the red and blue uniforms hanging on the wall.

'You'll also be wearing these.' He picked up a helmet from a nearby table and showed the headgear to the two men. 'These helmets are constructed from monocarbon filament. They'll protect you from anything short of a direct hit. They come equipped with a microphone and headset unit built in. We can talk directly to you and you can talk to each other.'

He put the helmet down and picked up two gauntlet-type devices. 'These wrist units will monitor your vital signs and keep you informed of the room and level you're on. They'll also act as a homing beacon in case we have to come in and get you.

'By the way, the only time we come in and get you is when you've won or if you're dead! Once you enter the arena you'll get no help from us.'

He put the gauntlets down and picked up one final item. 'This is a 9mm Uzi automatic. Use this gun when

you don't have another weapon. Its range is limited and it doesn't pack much of a punch but...'

Ash reached forward and grabbed the weapon. He took a magazine from the table and inserted it into the slot underneath the gun.

He faced Goldman and levelled the weapon at him.

'Enough talk. Let's kick some!'

CHAPTER EIGHT

Jim and Ash were kitted out and ready to go at 4pm. The show was due to start at 5 and would be broadcast live to billions of regular viewers around the world.

They were both seated outside the main set when Goldman appeared.

'I'm going to have to go to the control booth now, gentlemen,' he said. 'You'll be given the signal to go on shortly. Remember to smile, and if you get killed, go out with a bang!' With that he turned on his heel and marched off down the corridor.

Ash turned to Jim. 'Look buddy, if you want to back out now, I'll understand.'

'Look, Ash, I'm in this up to my ears now. If we're gonna do it let's make sure we get outta here alive. 'Cos if we do I'm gonna kick your butt!' grinned Jim.

The minutes slowly ticked by and the tension began to mount. At 4.55 the green confirmation light above the door winked on. That was their signal to enter the studio.

Jim wiped the sweat from his brow and checked his Uzi. He slid the weapon into its thigh holster and stood up next to Ash.

'OK pal, it's now or never,' he said nervously.

'Uh-huh,' replied Ash, moving to the door.

The double doors slid open and bright, blinding light spilled out into the corridor.

A loud cheer hit them from the audience as they walked onto the set. A familiar voice boomed over the loudspeakers.

'Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls! This is *SMASH TV*, the show that gives YOU, the public, what you want to see. And here's your host... Jasper Powell!'

The noise from the crowd was deafening as the floor opened up and a figure rose up on a platform. Jim recognised the face from the video footage he'd seen earlier. The man was short and podgy. Resting on his head was the most unconvincing toupee he'd ever seen. Powell was dressed in his usual red, glittery suit and expensive shoes.

The platform rose to meet the floor and the crowd fell silent. Jasper raised his hands in the air and shouted his all-too familiar catchphrase: 'Big money, big prizes! I love it!' The crowd went wild.

Jim realised this charismatic man held the audience in the palm of his hand. Jasper was the ultimate TV evangelist. His was the church of the mighty dollar. His weapons were his viewing figures and his followers were countless. He *was* the gameshow god.

The *SMASH TV* theme tune blurted out from hidden speakers and two extremely large-chested, bikini-clad young ladies ran from the wings. They draped themselves over the sparkling figure as he spoke.

'Welcome one and all to *SMASH TV*. I'm your host, Jasper Powell, and for the next few hours I'll be taking you into the dangerous world of live television!' The crowd went wild again as Jasper turned to speak to Jim and Ash.

The two men were standing on opposite sides of the studio on their own pedestals. Powell spoke.

'Let's start the show by finding out who our next



two lucky victi... er... contestants are!' The crowd laughed loudly at the fake joke. Jim knew it was intended to unnerve the pair of them but he decided to just laugh along with the grinning fools in the audience.

Powell faced Ash first and spoke into his microphone. 'Welcome to *SMASH TV*. And what's your name, contestant number one?'

Ash raised his gun in the air and shouted loudly 'Ashley Mitchell, and I'm ready to do some major butt-kicking!' The crowd roared its approval.

As Jasper was talking to Ash, Jim watched the gameshow host. As he'd noticed a few days ago, there was something strange about the whittering figure. Jim remembered he'd thought the gameshow host was too perfect. His clothes, his mannerisms... everything about him was just perfect.

Jasper turned to Jim. 'And you, contestant two. Do you have a name?' said the sequined fool.

Jim spoke. 'I'm James Lucas and I'm here to win *SMASH TV*!' Again, the crowd went wild. They're really lapping up this crap, he thought.

Jasper Powell turned to face his adoring audience. As he did so, Jim noticed a metallic cable running down the outside of the gameshow host's leg and disappearing into the floor. What the hell could that be? A pipe leading from his colostomy bag? No, Powell was too squeaky-clean to have anything like that. No, there was definitely something about this man Jim couldn't put his finger on.

As he pondered on this thought, he could hear the voice of Miles Goldman in his headset. 'When I give

the signal, Lucas, you're to proceed to the main entrance of the arena. Do you copy?'

Jim responded, 'Copy.'

He turned to Ash, who was grinning like the rest of the crowd. Damn, thought Jim. Ash has been taken in by this jerk, too.

Ash made an OK sign to Jim and they both slid their guns from their holsters. Flipping the safety switch off, they raised them and faced forward.

Powell was busy speaking. '...And remember folks, this show is sponsored by Dog–gone, the only portable dog toilet with built in flush facility!'

He faced the two men and looked up at the giant scoreboard. 'Contestants, are you ready?' he said. The crowd were working themselves up into a blood-crazed frenzy.

Jim and Ash answered, 'We're ready!!'

'Then let *SMASH TV* begin!' The crowd went wild.

Jim and Ash stepped down from their pedestals and stood in front of the doors to arena one. As the doors slowly parted, they heard Jasper Powell using another of his infamous phrases. This time, however, it had a deadly serious overtone.

'Good luck... you'll need it!'

CHAPTER NINE

They moved into the first arena. The sound of the crowd died away as the doors closed ominously behind them.

The room was a solid metal box with an exit in the far wall. The door would only open when and if the room was completed. Sirens were wailing and the walls were covered in fake computers, their lights blinking on and off for no particular reason.

Above the room was an automatic camera deck. The picture and sound quality were all monitored from the main control booth.

The familiar whine of Miles Goldman's voice drifted over the headsets. 'Weapons activated. Cyberpunks go!'

Jim and Ash looked puzzled as the sirens stopped only to be replaced by the gameshow theme tune. Obviously the audience had to be kept amused at all times.

The door on the far side slid open and a crowd of club-wielding figures streamed out toward the waiting pair.

There was a moment of confusion and then a spark of recognition. Razorheads! Jim couldn't believe it. The TV station was using Razorheads in a gameshow.

As they approached, Jim noticed the blades and razors inserted into the thugs' skin which had earned them their name. The psychos were wearing metallic body suits which appeared to make them move faster than usual.

Ash was panicking. The memory of the beating he'd had at the hands of this gang was obviously still fresh in his mind.

Jim shouted across to his friend. 'Ash, snap out of it! Use your gun!'

Ash threw Jim a frightened look and accidently flicked the safety switch on. The lead Razorhead was almost upon him and there was no time to waste. Jim dove across the room, rolled and fired upwards, hitting the bald psycho directly in the chest.

Ash was still shaken but he'd sorted his gun out. The next wave of Razorheads fell to the ground as a stream of armour-piercing shells ripped into them.

Jim smiled. He thought Ash might lose it for an instant but watching the red-clad figure in front of him brought a sense of determination to his fear-clouded mind. Standing up, he followed Ash's lead and released a volley of fire against the marauding horde.

They stood their ground for about 30 seconds then bolted in opposite directions to try and circle their enemy. They were cutting down the approaching figures when a section of the floor near Jim lit up. He stepped on it and heard a female voice above the gunfire. 'A brand new toaster!' it said. Jim smiled as he won the first prize of the day. There would be many more to come.

He could see Ash darting along the opposite wall and 'whooping' loudly to himself. He'd picked up a missile launcher that had appeared through the floor and was using it to obliterate the opposition.

As they exploded in a shower of metal and flesh, Jim heard a noise from his wrist gauntlet. The device

was displaying a crude electronic map of the game area. He followed the tiny rooms along to the end of the section and noticed something strange in the last room. As the image faded he was sure he'd read the display correctly. It had said Mutoid Man. What the hell was a Mutoid Man?

As Ash blew away the last few punks, the woman's voice once again drifted over the headsets. 'The room is now clear. Proceed to room two.'

The two friends grinned at each other and moved toward the waiting exit. As they entered the second room the voice said, 'ROOM TWO, COLLECT POWER UPS!'. Doors opened and more Razorheads began to pour in and attack them.

'Don't these guys ever give up?' said Ash, disposing of the nearest maniacs with a short burst of fire.

'I guess they just don't know when to roll over and play dead!' replied Jim, casually picking off more of the club carriers.

The floor began to light up faster as more and more prizes appeared in the room. Ash picked up most of them while Jim kept the punks busy. A floor panel slid open and a device was raised up through it. Jim grabbed it and pressed the small button on top. The Razorheads disappeared in a deadly fireball.

'Bingo!' shouted Jim. They collected the rest of the prizes and took the bottom exit.

The next room boasted another friendly name. 'EAT MY SHRAPNEL!' read the digitised display on the wall. As cyberpunks poured into the arena, Jim noticed strange, bulky men that accompanied them. The men were identical in blue jump suits, with large packs on

their backs. As they moved they bent down and placed something small on the floor. Jim recognized it instantly. A mine! This game was getting deadlier by the minute.

He spoke into his microphone, 'Ash, those guys are laying mines. Don't go anywhere near them!'

'Roger, skipper!' said Ash flippantly.

He was presently surrounded by a crackling green energy field which sparked loudly as Razorheads collided with it. Ash had been busy collecting as many prizes and as much cash as he could. He already had numerous toasters, cars and VCRs, more than he could possibly use in a lifetime. That didn't bother him — he could easily sell them to pay off his ever-decreasing debt.

Jim, on the other hand, was preoccupied with the thugs that were currently advancing on his position.

He called to Ash, 'Hey pal, how's about a helping hand over here?'

Ash instantly obliged, using his new-found toy, a rapid fire grenade launcher, to decimate Jim's opponents. The explosion rocked Jim and shook the whole studio. He hoped the audience were getting their money's worth of carnage and sick sport.

The room was clear and the two friends moved to the exit on the right.

'TOTAL CARNAGE!' came the all-too familiar voice of Jasper Powell, 'I LOVE IT!'

Ash turned to Jim. 'If we get out of this alive, I'm gonna take a long vacation!' and they charged into the waiting horde.

CHAPTER TEN

The next few rooms were a complete blur for Jim. They'd gone through 'CROWD CONTROL', 'MEET MR SHRAPNEL', 'TANK TROUBLE' and were presently collecting prizes in the bonus room.

He gave Ash a fearful look. 'I don't know what's waiting behind that door, pal' he said pointing to the last room 'but I know we're not gonna like it!' Ash nodded and the pair of them walked slowly into the arena.

The screen was flashing its annoying neon message, 'MUTOID MAN'.

Ash looked puzzled. 'What the hell's a Mutoid Man?' he said.

'I don't know,' replied Jim, 'but I think we're about to find out!'

There was a large opening in the wall. From it came a deep rumbling. It sounded as if some sort of large vehicle was coming toward them. They braced themselves and were prepared to run.

Instead, they found they couldn't move at all. The sight that confronted them was terrifying. The creature was human, or at least part of it was. It was some sort of human/machine hybrid.

The top half was a giant of a man with a shaven head. Where the legs should have been there were tank tracks. Mutoid Man was some sort of half man, half battletank! Situated at the front of the tank were two gun posts manned by Razorheads. The whole spectacle was so bizarre it took Jim a moment to clear his head

and take aim.

'Open fire!' he shouted to Ash.

A barrage of machine gun fire flew at the tank but simply richocheted off the side of it.

'I think we're gonna need a bigger boat,' joked Ash.

Jim searched frantically for something else to use. A floor panel opened up and a large device appeared. He grabbed the photon gun and aimed at the creature's head. Mutoid Man howled in pain as the blast singed his flesh. He looked angrily in Jim's direction and squinted. A blast of raw energy hit the floor beneath him and sent Jim and Ash diving for cover.

Ash recovered first and used his grenade launcher to take out the two front gunners. Jim took the opening and moved to the side of the lumbering behemoth. With Ash on the other side, they fired together and succeeded in destroying Mutoid Man's left arm.

The creature bellowed and gazed angrily at the pair of them. It directed another barrage of laser fire toward them and knocked Jim against one of the side walls. His arm was bruised but he quickly scrambled to his feet and returned the attack.

By now Mutoid Man had lost both arms and had a gaping wound in its chest. A smart bomb appeared. Ash immediately activated it. The explosion tore through the tank monster; the shockwave sent the pair of them reeling.

Through the smoke and noise they could hear Mutoid Man howling in agony. Something was happening. Jim could see the creature's torso had been entirely ripped away by the blast — but the tank section was still moving. As the fans whirled away and



cleared the room of smoke, Jim saw the tank was controlled by Mutoid Man's head, which had relocated itself to the centre of the vehicle.

'Doesn't this guy ever give up?' yelled Ash.

'I guess we're gonna have to teach him some manners,' replied Ash over the intercom.

They let loose another volley of fire and dived for cover as Mutoid Man attempted to crush them under his tank tracks. Its attack failed and Ash saw an opening. He took aim and sent a missile screaming toward the tank's right track. The explosion took out the entire right-hand side of the machine and left the beast stranded in the centre of the arena.

'Let's finish him off!' shouted Ash and the two of them moved in for the kill.

Mutoid Man was still using hie eye beams, though, and was determined to destroy the two insects before him. His under-developed brain still hadn't registered the damage he'd sustained or the fact his life signs were critical.

The creature had just one purpose in life and that was to kill anyone who tried to get past his lair. He wasn't aware of the fact he was one of the main attractions on a gameshow or that millions of people were tuned into the spectacle unfolding at that moment.

Using the last of its energy reserves, it attempted to fry Jim, who was approaching from the left, circling Mutoid Man's body in a vain attempt to find a weak spot. The beast tried to aim at the running shape before him but its targeting computer and heat sensors had been knocked out. The resulting shot hit the ceiling and caused a large chunk of debris to land on the tank,

fracturing Mutoid Man's skull.

As the creature began to die, it snarled and fired lasers indiscriminately. The beams hit the walls and floors but missed the two contestants.

Jim and Ash continued to fire as Mutoid Man entered his death throes. The eye beams were getting weaker and the lights on the tank hull were beginning to dim.

They moved in closer and with a final blast, terminated the monster's life.

They stood there for a moment, sweating, then began to laugh loudly. Jim was the first to speak.

'Well... that wasn't so tough!'

Ash sat on the tank, catching his breath. 'Ha! Yeah, that's Level 1 completed. I guess things can only get better from now on, eh?'

They moved to the exit and prepared to enter the second level.

Jim spoke. 'I swear, Ash, I'm getting too old for this!'

'I could have told you that!' he replied with a grin.

They gripped the barrels of their weapons and stood by the door. Level 2 was next and the end was almost in sight.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The second level proved more of a challenge than they expected. There'd been the usual rush of Razorheads in each room but there'd also been more deadly threats to deal with. They'd taken the quickest route to the end of the level but it had also been the most treacherous.

Starting in the room called 'ORBS', they had to defeat hundreds of the futuristic killing devices before the door would open. They went to 'FILM AT 11', dodged more landmines in 'DEFEND ME', carried on through 'TURTLES NEARBY', 'THESE ARE FAST', 'BUFFALO HERD NEARBY' and the aptly named 'LASER DEATH ZONE'.

The final challenge on this level had been the huge floating anti-grav head entitled 'SCARFACE'. This large mass of twisted metal and molded flesh had given Jim and Ash a run for their money. Jim's leg had been hit by shrapnel as Scarface exploded and was limping badly. Ash, on the other hand, was loving every minute of the show and Jim was seriously starting to worry about his friend's sanity.

Ash had started to take unnecessary risks when tackling foes and this was beginning to worry Jim. The two of them had to work together as a team if they were to have any chance of escaping with their lives.

Level 3 took some beating as the pair of them battled through room after room of high-tech death devices. They'd travelled through 'TURTLES BEWARE', 'SCORPION FEVER', 'WALLS OF PAIN'

and found secret rooms that had given them yet more riches. The Razorheads had all been killed and Ash had satisfied his sense of revenge. With the money he'd made he could easily pay off his debts and live comfortably for the rest of his life.

The guardian at the end of that section had been a large, genetically-altered reptile called 'COBRA HEAD'. This two-headed snake had been mutated into a larger form and its scales replaced with steel plating. Heavy calibre weapons had been fitted into the mouth area. The creature was a living death dealer.

The two heads had taken longer to destroy than the other abominations but the fact they were almost at the end of the game made Jim and Ash savour the victory even more.

Level 4 consisted of just two rooms. These were 'KEY ROOM 1' and 'KEY ROOM 2', accessed using the correct keys obtained from around the various levels. This gained the two men entrance to the final room, 'EAT MY EYEBALLS'.

Jim and Ash positioned themselves on either side of the room and waited. That was all they could do. As they waited, the entire world held its breath for the events of the next few moments to unfold.

This was the final challenge. Clear this last hurdle and they'd be home and dry.

It wouldn't be easy. They'd been informed by Goldman, somewhat belatedly, that there were no weapons in this final section. They'd have to rely on the machine guns and their wits alone.

There was a gaping hole, 50 feet across, torn into the far wall of the arena. Jim noticed the metal around the

edge of the hole was corroded and melted. Whatever had come through that makeshift entrance was generating a hell of a lot of heat.

The throbbing in Jim's leg was getting worse. The wound he'd sustained earlier would become infected if he didn't get treatment soon. He'd torn off a piece of material from his trousers and tied it tightly around his thigh to prevent further bleeding. The loss of blood was causing his vision to blur and this made him worry about his ability to aim.

Ash, too, was in a bad way. His wounds from the Razorheads' attack had started to open up again. The pressure from his broken rib was beginning to make it difficult to breath.

His wrist was okay but his gun had been misfiring in the last few rooms and Ash doubted it would be working much longer. Not that he minded, of course. He'd taken out a little insurance earlier on which would ensure victory.

A distant rumbling came from the depths of the tunnel. Two headlights flickered on in the darkness and Jim could hear the sound of a powerful motor being revved enthusiastically. He squinted into the blackness as the large shape lumbered toward them.

As it began to emerge from the confines of the wall, Ash let out a yell.

'Hey Jim, it's our old pal Mutoid Man, come back for more!'

Jim was transfixed as the huge beast rolled steadily toward them.

'I don't think it is, Ash!' said Jim, letting off a volley of fire.

The creature certainly had the body and tank elements of Mutoid Man, but this time he was bizarrely dressed. He was wearing the sequined outfit and wig of Jasper Powell, the gameshow host. It was identical to Jasper, down to huge, ridiculous grin.

Ash backed away. 'Great outfit, man. Doesn't he look like old Jasper?' he said, as he began to fire off quick bursts.

The giant glanced down and let out a booming reply, "You fool, I *AM* JASPER POWELL!!"

The two men stood, open-mouthed, not believing what they'd just heard. Ash stepped forward and shouted at the towering figure before him.

'Of course you are, and I'm…' Before he could finish he was knocked to the floor by a blast from the Jasper creature's eyes. It flung him through the air and he landed in a crumpled heap against the wall.

The creature spoke again: 'What you are, Mr Mitchell, is dead!'

Jim ran to his friend's side and knelt next to him. Ash propped himself up on his elbow and rubbed the back of his head.

'Let's toast this guy!' he said, getting to his feet and taking aim again.

Jim joined him and the pair of them opened fire together. The hail of shells simply bounced off the armoured hull of the tank and did little more than scratch the massive Jasper head.

'Do you honestly think you can hurt me with those pea shooters?' said Jasper, grinning widely. The two men stared at each other in disbelief at the ineffectiveness of their weapons.

With a mad cry, Ash ran toward the tank and started to climb up the side. Jim followed him in a vain effort to reach the creature's face.

As they climbed, Jasper laughed loudly and swung an arm the size of a small truck in their direction. Ash ducked and the limb whistled over his head. Jim wasn't so lucky. The arm struck him hard and sent him reeling. He scrambled around on the floor, coughing blood and clutching his chest.

Ash was moving unnoticed around the rear of the tank. Jasper spoke.

'You pitiful creatures. Do you really think you ever had a chance? This is my show and I make the rules!'

'What the hell are you, Powell?' shouted Jim from the arena floor. The creature stared down at the fragile object before him and bellowed a reply.

'Why, a mutant of course! The unfortunate result of genetic experiments performed by the military a few years ago. Does that answer your question?'

The tank tracks began to whirl as Powell drove toward the fallen figure.

'They created a batch of soldiers that would literally be giants on the battlefield. The scientists hoped that by stimulating the Endorphine gland they could create enormous super-soldiers!'

The tank was getting nearer and Jim couldn't get away fast enough.

'What the hell's an Endorphine gland anyway?' he said, in an effort to stall the approaching figure.

'The gland controls growth in the body, Mr Lucas. By using accelerated growth serums, the army created a whole platoon of deformed monsters. Only a handful

survived the process, of course, and the side effects were quite severe. None of us could use our legs, so they were amputated. The military replaced them with these tanks,' said Jasper, pointing down. 'They were the only things that could support our weight and make us mobile.

'Of course, the army could never let our existence become known to the public, but they couldn't keep us locked up, either. As the most intelligently advanced of the group, I persuaded the military to start this gameshow.'

'You did what?!' cried Jim, as he tried to escape the monster's tracks.

'The show let them test us out and served as good platform from which to test new weapons,' replied Jasper.

Jim searched round frantically for Ash. Where the hell was he?

'You mean the army tests experimental weapons on the public?!' said Jim, a horrified look on his face.

'Of course,' snorted Jasper. 'Who's going to miss a few gung-ho macho idiots? It's certainly cheaper than waiting for a war to happen!'

Jim could see Ash out of the corner of his eye. His friend was edging toward Jasper's face, gun in hand. Jim kept the creature talking.

'So who was that we saw in the studio?' yelled Jim.

The monster flashed a white-toothed grin. 'A synthetic duplicate, of course! I would present the show myself, but as you can see, I'm not exactly built for it!'

Jasper was almost on top of Jim now. The huge tank tracks were grinding away as the inhuman monster

attempted to crush the life out of the hapless contestant.

In an instant, Ash swung around to stand directly in Powell's face. He pointed his gun at the gigantic left eye and smiled.

'Hey, remember me?' And with that he wasted an entire ammo clip into the creature's eye.

Jasper screamed as the shells tore into his flesh, partially blinding him. The tank stopped moving and Jim rolled out of the way.

Ash attempted to leap off the tank but was swiftly grabbed by Jasper's right hand. The vice-like grip tightened on Ash as he felt two more of his ribs snap.

'You are starting to become a nuisance, Mr Mitchell!' snarled Powell through clenched teeth. His eye was almost totally destroyed and fluid was leaking from the wound.

'My Razorheads failed to dispose of you so I guess it's up to me! You see, Mr Mitchell, what your tiny little mind has failed to piece together is the big picture. You have not yet realised that it is I you owe the money to! Or the fact it was I who allowed you onto the gameshow, so you could try to win enough money to pay me off. Not only does my syndicate run this studio, but it also runs most of the gambling establishments in the city. But that is unimportant now. Either way, you lose!'

Jasper squeezed tighter and blood began to well up in Ash's mouth.

He screamed and Jim shouted up, 'Let him go, Powell. You've won.'

'Yes I have, Mr Lucas, and you've lost!' gloated



Powell, as he opened his mouth wide to laugh.

Ash took a small, round object from his pocket and pressed a button on top. 'No, you lose!' he said, tossing a smart bomb saved from a previous arena down the host's throat.

The following explosion ripped through Jasper's body and struck his main power supply. A huge fireball shredded the monster, sending metal and flesh cascading into the air. The shockwave forced Jim to the floor and he stared in horror at the devastation before him.

As the fire subsided, Jim got to his feet and scrambled through the rubble for his friend. There was no sign of Ash.

His friend had sacrificed his life to terminate the foul Jasper creature.

There was nothing more Jim could do. He turned to the exit and wandered out of the arena as the sprinkler system came on.

He was soaked to the skin in seconds as the fire was extinguished and he returned to the main studio. The audience was cheering and lights were flashing as he limped into the area. As he did so, a furious Miles Goldman marched up to him.

'You're disqualified, Mr Lucas! How dare you use a concealed weapon! This is a disgrace! I've a good mind to…' He was cut short by Jim's fist striking him squarely in the face. He hit the ground and stayed there.

Jim moved slowly through the crowd as they swarmed round him in an effort to touch the show's champion contestant. As he fought his way through

the flock of people, he saw a face he recognised. It was Karen.

He pushed his way past the grinning faces to reach his wife. They found each other and embraced for what seemed like an eternity.

Karen spoke. 'I didn't think you were going to make it, Jim. I just didn't think you were going to make it.' She started to cry as Jim hugged her tightly.

'I made it honey, it's alright. I made it.'

As they held each other, the main scoreboard lit up, announcing James Lucas as the supreme *SMASH TV* champion. His prizes were displayed, as was the final score: ten million. The highest and only cash award in the history of the show.

As the emotions began to overwhelm him, Jim turned one last time to face the arena. He thought of his lost friend and the sacrifice he'd made. He spoke silently to himself.

'Well, you got your wish Ash. This was the ultimate ride, the last great adventure.

'You'll never grow old and fat like me — it wouldn't have suited you anyway. I'll remember you, and feel a lot richer for it.

'Goodbye, Ash.'

EPILOGUE

Two weeks later

The studio was deserted as Miles Goldman showed the military advisers around the devastation. He pointed at the wreckage and frowned.

'As you can see, gentlemen, the damage was quite extensive. We lost two alpha units and the weapons damage runs into the trillions.'

A senior officer stepped forward to speak to one of the Generals. 'Well sir, do we close the installation down or not?' he said.

The star-studded General turned to face his adviser and as he spoke, kicked the remains of Mutoid Man with his foot. He grinned.

'I don't think so, soldier. It's our duty to serve the public. And what the people want, the people will get!'

HOW THE SEGA FORCE GUTTERSNIPE REVIEWERS RATE SMASH TV!

MAT

Yes people, this is the ultimate bloodbath! You might have played the original arcade version and been totally blown away by the amazing graphics and sound. Well, the good news is Acclaim have done a brilliant job of converting it to the Mega Drive.

Believe me, this is no picnic! With room after room of terrifying danger and pant-wetting action, *Smash TV*'s one game you won't complete in an afternoon. Not only is there a constant stream of nasties through the studio doors, there are also exploding shrapnel blokes, mines to avoid and laser-firing discs to dodge!

The whole game looks and sounds incredible. The graphics are almost identical to the coin-op and move very smoothly. Sound effects explode from your TV as wave after wave of enemies are dispatched. The sampled speech helps make this game a thrill. Get *Smash TV* before it gets you!

90%

ADE

I've waited a long time for this little corker. Was it worth going blue in the face for? Yes indeedy! *Smash TV*'s one of those games where you don't have to wade through a load of instructions to ensure a good time's had by all. Just boot up, get in there and give 'em some welly!

Boy, is it tough! A two-player blast's definitely where *Smash TV* comes to the fore. You're gonna need all the help ya can muster to get through those arenas! I had a few

qualms about the control system when I started but a few plays later my worries were swept aside. I very rarely used [C] to lock. The best button to activate is [B]. Run backwards and blast the basts from here to kingdom come. Only keep an eye on what's coming up behind ya!

Soundwise, it could've been beefier, the tunes don't suit the game too well. A little namby-pampy I felt. The speech is pretty nifty, though. Compared to many MD games *Smash TV*'s a great concept! A challenge and a half that adds a whole new element to the shoot-'em-up genre. BIG GAME! BIG CHALLENGE! YOU'LL LOVE IT!!

87%

PRESENTATION 83%

Options screen lets you choose difficulty level, players and controls

VISUALS 90%

Arcade perfect conversion, smooth movement, good FX

SONICS 89%

Ear-blasting sound FX and brilliant sampled speech

PLAYABILITY 74%

Difficult to control, stick to two players

LASTABILITY 92%

This one will take yonks to compete, four levels of futuristic may-hem

FORCE 91%

An amazing game only let down by its difficulty factor

THE TIPS

You've read the novel and taken in the review. Now it's time to have a quick look at the true horrors lurking in each of *Smash TV*'s diabolical arenas!



Are you ready for this? You'd better be!

STAGE 1

FORCE TIP #1
The route that looks the quickest isn't always what it seems!
You may have to go out of your way if you're looking for hi–scores!

COLLECT KEYS

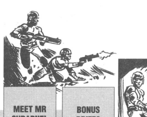


TV STUDIO — **ARENA 1** — **COLLECT POWER–UPS**



EAT MY SHRAPNEL





MEET MR SHRAPNEL — **BONUS PRIZES**

CROWD CONTROL — **TANK TROUBLE** — **MUTOID MAN**



TOTAL CARNAGE

FORCE TIP #2
Watch out for the mine–layers. Dressed in blue and carrying natty back–packs. Try and take them out early, before they explode into shrapnel!

STAGE 1



TV Studio

Nothing to worry about here — except your nerve failing! Take the friendly welcome of the gameshow host with a pinch of salt 'cos underneath that warm, giving exterior he's out to get ya!

Arena 1

You're on your own now! This one's just a warm-up, though, so take out the hoodlums and collect the power-ups for a steady start. Always try and pick up the buddy gun for double fire power!

Collect Power-Ups

They're still being lenient on you, but watch out for the first of the mines! There are only three, but step on one

and you know about it!

The robots are coming, too. They may amble along slowly enough but leave them too long and they explode. Dodge that shrapnel!

Collect Keys

Take the high road and you meet the first of the laser gunners. There's only one sitting in the top wall but try and take him out early so you can deal with the hoodlums and robots in relative peace!

Collecting keys doesn't just apply here, pick up as many as you can everywhere for the key rooms on Stage 4.

Meet Mr Shrapnel

Believe it! Take out the two laser gunners this time then dodge the flying shrapnel as you take on the incoming robots.

Always try and pick up fresh force fields, they can do untold damage to the opposition!

Bonus Prizes

Go for the prizes here! Avoid the mines and pick up as many goodies as you can. There are toasters, sleek 1999 Roadsters, luggage sets, meat supplies... you name it, it's here.

Pick up some power–ups while you're there — when the hoodlums arrive, you're gonna need them. The opposition's stepped the pace up a little now, so use the speed-ups to stay one blast ahead of the game.

Eat My Shrapnel

If you decided to take the low road, prepare to dodge

the ball missiles. Just a couple of volleys here, then it's time to dodge robot shrapnel again.

Watch out for the arrival of the hoodlums. This time they're toting baseball bats and looking for trouble!

Total Carnage

I love it!! This is the real taste of things to come! Robots, ball missiles, mines, hoodlums, the lot! If you haven't mastered the firing options yet, you're gonna come unstuck here.

Just keep moving and firing hell for leather. Remember, if you want to move faster, move diagonally!

Crowd Control

Show 'em who's boss or you could go under and get kicked outta the show without the big money *or* big prizes.

Take out the two laser gunmen as early as you can then pick off the hoodlums. Dodge the ball missiles and make sure you get to the tanks before they get to you. Like the robots, they don't move fast, but they sure get in the way of your defensive moves!

Tank Trouble

Whichever route you opt for, you end up here. This is the final warm-up for the end-of-level scumbag, so stay on your toes!

The laser gunmen are there and so are the hoodlums and tanks. Pick up the buddy gun for extra fire power and, if you collect the revolving shield, don't waste it on robots or you lose it rapidly. Just be satisfied to hear that delightful squishing sound as the hoodlums go down under it!

Mutoid Man

So you made it this far, did you? This beggar means you no good at all and ordinary fire power doesn't harm him much, either. If you've picked up enough speed–ups you should be fast enough to keep outmanoeuvring him.

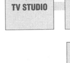
Pick up all the power-up weapons and blast hell out of this mother. Take off his arms then move in to knock his block off. It ain't over yet, though, 'coz he comes back for more — you're not finished till he loses his head a second time.

Just stay in there and nurse your trigger finger through to the end and the first prize-giving ceremony!

STAGE 2

ROWDY DROIDS

VACUUM CLEAN



TV STUDIO

ORBS!

MEET MY TWIN

FILM AT 11

DEFEND ME!



METAL DEATH

WATCH YOUR STEP

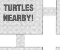
FIRE POWER IS NEEDED

SLAUGHTER 'EM

SMASH 'EM

LAZER DEATH

MEET SCARFACE



TURTLES NEARBY!



CHUNKS GALORE!



THESE ARE FAST!



BUFFALO HERD NEARBY!

STAGE 2



TV Studio

You've been here before! Just walk right past that host and get on with the business!

Orbs

Straight in at the deep end here and no messing! These orbs are small and difficult to aim at. They take more than one normal shot to destroy and the laser beams they emit are lethal. Stay clear if you want to avoid a nasty shock.

Try standing in the bottom left-hand corner and pumping bullets in all directions. If your joypad's responsive enough, you should be safe there.

Rowdy Droids

If you opt to take the top route, be prepared to shift up a gear 'coz things are getting pretty pacey out there!

The droids arrive first, looking like a set of dark Liquorice Allsorts! Not too difficult to kill, they still require more than one normal shot, or a power-up shot. Take them out and it's on to the hoodlums. They're beginning to close in fast now and don't be surprised to see them getting inside your revolving shield! Move it!

Vacuum Clean

Here come the ball missiles again, but this time they've got minds of their own! Dodge them or kill them, but decide fast before the buffalos get to ya!

Again, these aren't too difficult to wipe out, but they move damned fast and there are just too bleedin' many of them!

Fire Power Is Needed

Just when you thought it was safe... here come the Liquorice Allsorts and buffalos again, only there are even more of them out to get you.

Pick up the extra lives if you can, otherwise you're gonna run dry fairly soon!

Metal Death

Nothing but hoodlums here. Reckon you can take a breather?

No chance! These ones are coming at you like a high speed express train and even without baseball bats, you've gotta find every speed-up you can to out-

run them and pick them off! Whoo!

Watch Your Step

Here comes the goodie room again. Chase after the prizes before they disappear. However, like the name of the arena suggests, there are loads of mines hiding underneath the packages, so watch your step!

When you're done, the hoodlums and robots come out to play again, but you're not gonna like their game. Unfortunately, you've gotta play by their rules, so liven up and get blasting!

Slaughter 'Em

You'd better believe it! This time they're all out to get ya! Ball missiles, Liquorice Allsorts, robots, tanks and hoodlums.

If you haven't worn a hole in your firing finger yet, just watch the smoke start to rise here. As the gameplay speeds up, you find yourself switching to automatic to take everything in and keep dodging.

Film At 11

Getting down to the bottom route and the droid Allsorts are out in force again. Pick them off quickly before the hoodlums arrive. No baseball swingers here, luckily, but they don't half move quickly!

Defend Me!

Take care of yourself here! Grab the prizes, avoid the mines, then take everything the gameshow can throw at you.

Things are speeding up as the hoodlums, tanks and

robots arrive. This one's tough, so take care.

Turtles Nearby!

If you've still got plenty of lives left, don't expect to have many spare after the next few rooms!

The orbs are out again, so watch those lethal lasers and take out the tanks!

These Are Fast!

A little bit of an understatement here!

The arena's smaller so there's even less space to get away from the hoodlums. Whatever you do, don't get stuck in the corners or you might not get out alive!

Buffalo Herd Nearby!

The hosts are starting to toy with you now!

The ball missiles are out to get you first, followed by the Allsorts, then the buffalos. These lot really shift, so get moving and find your rhythm to finish them off!

Chunks Galore!

Get your laughing gear around this little lot! Ball missiles, Allsorts, robots, buffalos and tanks! Reckon you can handle this little lot?

If you've only got a couple of lives to spare, you're gonna be hard pressed to get through here!

Meet My Twin

For middle-of-the-roaders, there's a chance to taste the hoodlums closing in on you fast! No baseball swingers here but you're gonna have to work damned hard to beat them all back.

Smash 'Em!

This one's a real energy drainer. Get rid of the ball missiles and the Allsorts, then the hoodlums start coming at you, wave after wave. Reach the end of this arena and you'll need to pause, go and get a good cup of tea and relax for a few minutes before moving on.

One thing to remember, the route that looks the quickest isn't always what it seems, as you discover if you come this way!

Lazer Death Zone

Here we are again! All those routes come together again in the big bash before the end-of-level bast! Tanks, Allsorts and orbs come together to produce a nightmare combination of missiles, laser beams and incoming nasties!

Always aim to take out the orbs first, otherwise you're gonna find yourself trapped in the laser cross-beams!

Meet Scarface

Wanna take care of this tough character? You'd better be good, then!

First, you've got to break through that outer defensive rim — you're gonna need all the power-ups you can find to do that! Watch out for the flying missiles while you're about it.

Then, just when you think you've got him on the run, he's back in the form of a skullface! Avoid those horrible flying stars and blast him with every power-up you can find to have any chance of success in the big prize stakes!

STAGE 3



TV Studio

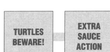
Getting pretty sick of this place, huh? Don't worry — get through the next stage and you're well on your way to getting sweet revenge on your host!

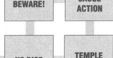
No Dice

Remember, this is the Cobra level, so watch out for the wrigglers straight away.

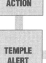
Fairly easy to avoid if you hang around near the bottom of the arena and shoot, but watch out for the hoodlums emerging from the bottom door later!

STAGE 3







TURTLES BEWARE!

EXTRA SAUCE ACTION

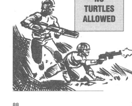
TV STUDIO

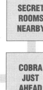
NO DICE

TEMPLE ALERT

NO TURTLES ALLOWED

TURTLE CHUNKS NEEDED




SECRET ROOMS NEARBY

ENJOY MY WEALTH



COBRA JUST AHEAD

WALLS OF PAIN






SCORPION FEVER

LAST ARENA?

COBRA DEATH




DYNAMITE COBRA BOSS!

USE THE BUFFALO GUN!




WITNESS TOTAL CARNAGE!

SECRET ROOMS NEARBY!

Turtles Beware!

You should be used to surprises by now, but you're still gonna be shocked by the speed of the baseball-toting hoodlums on this one.

Dodge the snakes and take them out as you go, but be quick about it!

Extra Sauce Action

If you thought the last arena was fun, this one's just the same, only they've thrown in a few shrapnel-blasting robots for good measure! This is getting beyond a joke!

Cobra Just Ahead

Haven't you already met half a million of them? Never mind, there are a few thousand more to contend with here, along with the hoodlums and robots.

'Total Carnage, I love it!!'

Secret Rooms Nearby

Want a breather? If you've got this far, you deserve one.

Luckily, this arena's all about a few tanks and one apparently lost group of hoodlums. Pick up the power-ups and take this one at your own speed for a change.

Enjoy My Wealth

Go for those keys hell-for-leather, you may need them later on!! Avoid the mines then await the serious onslaught of hoodlums, robots and ball missiles.

After the rest period of the last arena, this one's swung right back to top speed! Be warned.

Walls Of Pain

Can't you just feel the name of this arena already?

This is another hoodlum-bashing outing, but this time they're just too damned fast. They get inside your revolving shields, they get everywhere, and while you're trying to out-run them, the mines keep tripping you up and ripping your head off!

Unless you've got a few lives left, this one could be your downfall!

No Turtles Needed

Back to the bottom route and the snakes are out in force again, as are the ball missiles. Add a whole host of baseball-swinging hoodlums and you've got a cocktail mixed in hell (shaken, not stirred!). Pick off the snakes when you can and keep ahead of the pack.

Turtle Chunks Needed

High speed action again. The baseball swingers are back in town and so are the robots.

Like most arenas, if you can pick up enough speed-ups, you can make a mad dash through the centre of the enemy pack and slaughter a fair few of them. Don't try it when too many baseball swingers are around, though!

Dynamite Cobra Boss

The snakes aren't too bad here, neither are the buffalos, but they move bleedin' fast and there are just too many of them.

Use the power–ups, especially the force field, to

wipe them out as soon as they hit the screen, then try and keep circling them and shooting.

Witness Total Carnage

Loadsa wrigglers here! Again, position yourself to take them out until the baseball swingers appear. You've never seen so many of them in your life, so get that circling technique perfected and try to round 'em up in your gunfire.

Again, don't get stuck in the corners!

Secret Rooms Nearby

Robots, ball missiles and hundreds of baseball swingers! This is fast, believe it!

If you can get to the power-ups, use them, but don't throw away lives trying to battle through to them. Keep moving and keep firing.

Use The Buffalo Gun

Here comes the herd! This might be a bit of a breather if those bleeders weren't so fast.

Use your shield to blast them as they hit the screen, then keep circling, watching the doors for new arrivals, until you clean up.

Temple Alert

Getting into the middle way, you're gonna find this one helluva challenge! From the relative ease of **No Dice**, this one blows you away!

The Allsorts are back, along with snakes, baseball swingers and tanks. You're definitely on your own here. Just prey you get extra force field power-ups to collect

and dodge those snakes.

Scorpion Fever

Get past the last arena and you deserve a bleedin' medal. Instead, what you get are more snakes and even more baseball clubbers. Don't you just hate it when that happens?

Dodging the snakes isn't too much of a problem, but those hoodlums are too fast for their own good!

Last Arena?

I don't think so!! Here come the ball missiles again, as well as baseball swingers! Take it very carefully, as the floor's strewn with mines!

Cobra Death

If you managed Stage 2 then Stage 3 might have appeared to be slightly easier, depending on which route you took. Again, the shortest path isn't always what it seems.

Taking out the cobras isn't too great a problem, as long as you can reach the power-ups. Just keep blasting the necks and avoiding the missiles.

STAGE 4

FORCE TIP #3
Life in the key rooms is a whole lot easier if you concentrate on taking out the orbs as soon as you can. Without the threat of laser death, you can clean up!

YOU MAY ENTER KEY ROOM #1

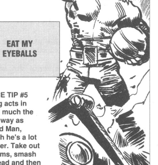
YOU MAY ENTER KEY ROOM #2



FORCE TIP #4
You thought Mutoid Man was hard? This is the big one! Some power–ups can be bounced off the walls to keep up your attack, so get moving and pile it on!



EAT MY EYEBALLS



FORCE TIP #5
Mr Big acts in pretty much the same way as Mutoid Man, though he's a lot tougher. Take out the arms, smash the head and then blow away the core!

STAGE 4

You May Enter Key Room Number 1

You've made it this far? The TV Host is getting worried now, and so he should be!

If you thought you'd seen it all, just wait till you get a load of this arena. Orbs, tanks, robots and a whole lot more. This one's a total nightmare and there's no hiding place! Just try to eliminate the orbs before the lasers get you!

You May Enter Key Room Number 2

More of the above! Meeting the TV Host's gonna be a doddle compared to the preliminaries! Or is it?!

Eat My Eyeballs

This is it! The big one! This time you're taking on the sadistic beggar who put you through this nightmare, the Gameshow Host!

He looks pretty much like Mutoid Man, but he's much, much tougher. Like Mutoid, though, you've gotta shoot through the various defences before you can claim ultimate success! keep circling, pick up the power-ups and blow him away with everything you've got!

It's gonna take most of you a long time to get this far, but believe me, it's worth every step you take. *SMASH TV* is one ball-bustin', gut-wrenchin' mother of a shoot-'em-up and you're gonna keep coming back for more, until you finally see the Gameshow Host's eyes go up in smoke!

GOOD LUCK! YOU'LL NEED IT!!